

*Written Testimony*

*Legislative Program Review & Investigations Committee*

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*Elizabeth B. Ritter, State Department on Aging*

Senator Fonfara, Representative Carpino, Senator Kissel, Representative Mushinsky and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Betsy Ritter. I am the Commissioner of the State Department on Aging. I am here today to provide a brief summary of the State Department on Aging's role in providing Long Term Care Services and Supports in Home and Community Based Settings, and to answer any questions you may have.

The State Department on Aging recognizes the importance of long term services and supports in the home and community. We know that people want to be at home and in the community for as long as possible and want to have the choice of where to receive their care; and this supports the best interests of the State. Our programs support individuals, families and caregivers in need of these services regardless of their income or payer source.

Services provided through the State Department on Aging and its partners as part of the long term services and supports structure include Federal Older Americans Act and state funded programs. Services include:

- Respite for caregivers
- caregiver support
- Fall Prevention
- Evidence-Based Chronic Disease Self-Management workshop
- Congregate and home delivered meals
- Nutrition education
- services in congregate housing
- options counseling
- Long-term Care Ombudsman

Not only do people need long term supports and services, they also need assistance in accessing the services and navigating the system. Through our Aging and Disability Resource



Centers and the “No Wrong Door”, with our partners, we provide Options Counseling. Options counseling involves assistance with sorting through the best available services and benefit options for someone, based on their needs and preferences and helping with applications if needed.

SDA is currently piloting a national curriculum on Person Centered Counseling training, which is considered a promising practice. Through a federal grant, we are able to offer this training free of charge to professionals at “entry points” who help individuals navigate the service system and connect to long term services and supports in the community. These “entry points” include senior centers, housing complexes through resident service coordinators, towns and cities through municipal agents, and community action agencies.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman serves people in nursing homes, assisted living and residential care homes, not in the community; however, it should be noted that the Ombudsman encounters issues moving people back into their communities even with the supports provided by the Money Follows the Person teams. The complexities of community living are often compounded by these issues: isolation, dependency on a small number of caregivers, challenges reaching out to people on whom they can depend, access to qualified caregivers and quality services like transportation and healthcare providers, basic needs such as groceries, socialization, etc.

SDA and its partners provide services through the federal Housing and Urban Development’s Congregate Housing Services Program to frail older adults and individuals with disabilities living in rural housing. They include:

- case management
- meals
- personal assistance
- housekeeping/chores
- personal emergency response systems
- companion
- medication monitoring
- adult day care
- transportation
- foot care .

We look forward to the results of this hearing and findings of this Committee, and we anticipate that the Committee’s recommendations may inform our Department’s next State Plan on Aging, which begins in 2017.

I want to thank the committee for dedicating time to discussing this important topic.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.





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